

ENERGY NEWS

From the Iowa Department of Natural Resources
September/October 2002

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DNR Helps Biofuels Industry with Environmental Compliance

In an effort to assist ethanol and biodiesel producers when building new plants, the DNR has made environmental compliance with this growing industry a top priority. The DNR hosted a stakeholder meeting on Oct. 11 to begin the process.

“The DNR strongly supports the development and expansion of the biofuels industry,” said Jeff Vonk, DNR director. “We want to help Iowa industries do what is best for our natural resources, without sacrificing economic success.”

The DNR’s goal is to provide compliance assistance, education, and serve as a resource in the early stages of plant planning.

Iowa’s biofuels industry has grown tremendously in the last five years, especially with the development of several farmer-owned cooperatives. Since 2001, 11 new ethanol plants have been planned or are already constructed, and two biodiesel plants are either expanding or building new production capabilities.

The DNR will continue working with the biofuels industry through workshops and in the development of educational materials.

For more information, contact Sharon Tahtinen at (515) 281-7066; e-mail: Sharon.Tahtinen@dnr.state.ia.us

Energy is Focus of Governor Campaign Forum

Iowa’s gubernatorial candidates discussed the state’s energy policy at a forum in Ames on October 14. Sponsored by the Iowa Sustainable Energy for Economic Development Coalition, the forum focused on expanding renewable energy development in Iowa.

Democratic Governor Tom Vilsack, Republican challenger Doug Gross, and Green Party candidate Jay Robinson each spoke for 30 minutes, offering ways to decrease Iowa’s reliance on fossil fuels through alternative energy such as wind and biomass. Their ideas ranged from using tax settlement money for new renewable energy facilities, to tax incentives and state loan programs.

For information, contact Michelle Kenyon with the Iowa Sustainable Energy for Economic Development at (319) 354-8116; e-mail: IaSEED@IowaCAN.org

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ISU to Develop Biobased Product Evaluation Program

Iowa State University (ISU) is receiving \$900,000 per year to develop a national program for biobased products evaluation, labeling and outreach. The program will be coordinated by ISU's Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS).

Biobased products are made from renewable materials grown in farm fields, coastal waters and managed forests. These resources can replace petroleum-based materials used in industrial and commercial products. Examples include lubricants, plastics or adhesives made from soybeans, and building products made from cornstalks.

"Developing a biobased industry in Iowa can give a significant boost to our state's economy and, at the same time, contribute to national security and environmental quality in the United States," said Wolfgang Kliemann, associate vice provost for research.

Funding for the program was authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (the Farm Bill), which establishes a program in federal agencies for preferred procurement of biobased products. CIRAS will set up systems to test biobased products according to specified protocols for biobased content, life-cycle costs and environmental effect.

For more information, contact Ronald Cox with CIRAS at (515) 294-9592, or go to the Web site: www.ciras.iastate.edu

Please note: information for this article came from a press release issued by CIRAS, October 2002.

California Enacts Renewable Energy Standard

California Gov. Gray Davis has signed a bill establishing a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) for the state. The RPS will nearly double California's existing wind, geothermal, biomass and solar energy production.

The bill, which was signed Sept. 12, 2002, requires retail sellers of electricity to increase their use of non-hydro renewable resources by at least 1 percent per year until 20 percent of their retail sales are procured from renewable sources. Retailers are required to reach the 20 percent mark by 2017.

Davis also signed a bill committing California to continue public programs that support renewable energy and renewable energy research. It also allows for net metering for specific California facilities and ensures available funds for the RPS.

For more information, contact Marwan Masri with the California Energy Commission at (916) 654-4878.

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Energy Industry Discusses Winter Fuel Prices

Energy industry professionals from around Iowa met in Des Moines Oct. 17 to discuss supply and price issues of heating oil, propane and natural gas for the 2002-2003 heating season.

The annual half-day Winter Fuels Forum included analysts from the DNR, Iowa utility companies and energy-consulting firms that shared national and local developments that could affect Iowa's fuel prices this winter.

"Fuel prices will be up slightly this winter, compared to last year's below-average prices," said David Downing, DNR data analyst. "However, many factors could quickly impact heating fuel prices, including cold weather for the upcoming heating season, or international events that could affect supplies."

For more information contact David Downing at (515) 281-4876 or e-mail at David.Downing@dnr.state.ia.us

New Directory and Workshop Will Educate on Photovoltaics

National energy experts will share the latest innovations in photovoltaic (PV) system design and installation at a workshop Nov. 6-7 in Ames. The workshop will be an in-depth session for engineers, architects, utility staff, and other energy professionals.

Along with the workshop, the DNR has created a new PV directory for the Midwest educating consumers and businesses on the process of choosing PV for a building. The directory is available on the DNR's Web site.

With funding from the Dept. of Energy, the projects are part of an overall effort by the DNR to improve understanding in the Midwest on PV technology.

"Solar power offers great opportunities for Iowa," said Sharon Tahtinen with the DNR. "We look forward to increasing the familiarity and practical understanding of PV systems, and hopefully laying the groundwork for more PV installations in Iowa."

The DNR is also developing a "yellow pages" guide to PV installers, designers and manufacturers in the Midwest, and case studies of specific installations. These materials will be available by January 2003.

For more information, go to the DNR Web site at: www.state.ia.us/dnr/energy/programs/solar, or contact Jennifer Moehlmann at: (515) 281-8518; e-mail: Jennifer.Moehlmann@dnr.state.ia.us

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DNR Names Top Managers in Environmental Services

As part of its reorganization plans, the Iowa DNR has appointed a new administrator for its Environmental Services Division, along with chiefs for the bureaus of Energy and Waste Management; Air Quality; Land Quality and Geologic Survey; and Field Services and Compliance.

Wayne Gieselman, the new Environmental Services division administrator since April, was the DNR's head of agriculture programs for three years. Gieselman is former chief engineer for the Iowa Natural Resources Council and a former member of the Water, Air and Waste Management Commission. He has operated a hog and grain farm near Morning Sun since 1986.

Brian Tormey, a 13-year DNR veteran, was named chief of the department's new Energy and Waste Management Bureau in July. Tormey began his DNR career with the water supply section, shifting to waste management in 1992. Since then, he has been involved with comprehensive planning, waste reduction and assistance, and improving services to the regulated community. Tormey served as chief of the department's Waste Management Assistance Bureau for the past two years.

Catharine Fitzsimmons is the new chief of the DNR's Air Quality Bureau. Fitzsimmons has 10 years experience in air quality, serving as planning section supervisor overseeing budget, rules and dispersion modeling. She also served as interim director for former chief Pete Hamlin, who retired in January.

Tim Hall has been named the bureau chief of the Land Quality and Geologic Survey Bureau. Hall was a senior project engineer for seven years at Foth and Van Dyke in Des Moines and has worked extensively with landfill projects as well as other projects for the firm. He has also served as an adjunct professor at Drake University.

Barbara Lynch is the chief of the new Field Services and Compliance Bureau. Lynch has been with the DNR and its predecessor agencies for 23 years and was the supervisor of the agency's northwest Iowa field office in Spencer for the past 12 years. Lynch will direct the bureau's efforts in helping with compliance and assistance across the state.

The fifth bureau in the Environmental Services Division, Water Quality, keeps Jack Riessen as its bureau chief.

Sharon Tahtinen, former chief of the Energy Bureau, continues to lead the agency's energy programs and serves on several state and national energy boards and committees.

In December 2001, the DNR announced plans to streamline its seven divisions to three, helping to improve services across environmental programs and increase efficiencies.

For more information, contact Julie Tack at (515) 281-8665; e-mail: Julie.Tack@dnr.state.ia.us